United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council, in Presidential statement last night, condemns violation by Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of trade sanctions against it, after Bulgarian convoy carries diesel oil to Danube port of Prahovo.

+ Security Council demands immediate end to siege of Maglaj and condemns Bosnian Serb shelling of civilian population; also demands access to city for humanitarian aid convoys and UNPROFOR.

+ UNHCR appeals for $30 million to assist refugees and internally displaced people in Caucasus and central Asia.

+ As Conference on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks begins, Canada says over-fishing has turned Grand Banks into "marine desert".

+ Preparatory Committee for 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction meets in Geneva.

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The Security Council last night strongly condemned the flagrant violation by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) of its resolutions prohibiting the shipment of commodities and products to the country. It took that action in response to an incident on 6 March, in which a Bulgarian convoy -- the "Han Kubrat" -- carried 6,000 tons of diesel oil to the Federal Republic via the Danube River port of Prahovo.

In a statement read out by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimee (France), the Council held the Federal Republic fully accountable for the non-return of the convoy's cargo. It called on the Bulgarian authorities to investigate the incident and to prosecute those responsible. The Council also invited the Yugoslav Government to respect its commitments to guarantee freedom and security of navigation on the Danube.

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In its second meeting last night, the Security Council demanded an immediate end to the siege of Maglaj and strongly condemned the indiscriminate shelling of civilians there by the Bosnian Serbs. In a statement read out by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimee (France), the Council also demanded that Bosnian and Croat Serbs allow humanitarian aid convoys access to the city and the evacuation of those needing urgent medical attention.

The Council said the situation in Maglaj had become intolerable because of the intensity of the nine-month siege, for which the Bosnian Serbs were primarily responsible. The Council expressed particular concern at the obstruction and looting of humanitarian aid convoys, and said it was appalled that not one had reached the city since last October. It condemned recent attacks against personnel of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It also demanded that the Bosnian Serbs permit UNPROFOR unimpeded access to Maglaj.

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The UNHCR today launched an appeal for more than $30 million to support programmes for hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people in the Caucasus and central Asia. The appeal covers a wide range of UNHCR-assistance programmes in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

In Armenia, the UNHCR says some 2.5 million people, out of a population of 3.5 million, face famine and health risks because of extremely harsh conditions and a lack of basic resources. In Tajikistan, where civil war destroyed nearly 17,000 homes and displaced more than 500,000 people, the UNHCR needs $13 million for shelter and infrastructure projects. In Azerbaijan, the agency will assist 300,000 refugees and displaced persons.

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The second substantive session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks began at Headquarters yesterday. In his opening address, Conference Chairman Satya Nandan (Fiji) said steps had to be taken to protect fish stocks if a crisis were to be averted. Since the Conference's previous session last July, fisheries had continued to collapse, with severe consequences for fishing communities.

The Conference has a mandate from the General Assembly to find solutions to the problems of high seas fisheries, particularly regarding conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. It will focus on a negotiating text, summarizing the views expressed by delegations last July, which deals with cooperation between States to ensure the sustainability of high seas resources.

In yesterday's discussion, Canada said States fishing under flags of convenience had devastated Grand Banks straddling stocks, turning the area into a "marine desert". Canada could not allow the stringent conservation

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practices of the North Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to be wasted in that way.

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The Preparatory Committee for the 1994 World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction yesterday began its current session in Geneva. The Committee was established by the General Assembly last year to review organizational and substantive preparations for the Conference, which will be held in Yokohama, Japan, in May. The Conference will review the accomplishments of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, chart a programme for future action, and highlight the need for disaster reduction policies.

The Committee yesterday elected Don Nanjira (Kenya) as its Chairman and established two working groups to consider a draft final document for the Conference and procedural matters.

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